

were afraid to act and vote for the defence of the farmer, for the defence of everybody who is engaged in an essential industry. That is why the people of this country will not believe in Bracken. They will say: "If his promises are no better than what is done by his supporters in the house, what can we expect of him? We will drop him as we have dropped Bennett, Meighen and all the others." But I want my party to do better than that. I want my party to understand the troubles of the farmers and to do something for them. That is why I make an earnest appeal to the government. If the Minister of National Defence does not accept my views now, I hope there will be a majority of the members of the cabinet who will do so in due course and, it is to be hoped, in the near future.

Mr. FRASER (Peterborough West): I should like to ask the minister a question. I have just opened a letter which I received this afternoon and which is addressed to myself and dated February 26, 1944. It reads as follows:

Dear sir,

At the meeting of the Peterborough active army auxiliary, Thursday of this week, one of the members brought to the attention of those present the fact that the wounded in hospital in Italy and in England were not receiving their mail or parcels from home until they were discharged from hospital and had rejoined their unit. This was confirmed by other members in attendance and it was put in the form of a motion that a letter be written to you asking if you would be kind enough to bring this matter of the distribution or delivery of mail to the boys in hospital in Italy and England to the proper authorities in the hope that something could be worked out to improve this situation. The members felt that their sons and husbands had greater need of cheerful letters and consoling parcels when they were confined in hospital than when they were with their companions in camp. It was with this in mind that I was authorized to write this letter to you.

E. Alda Ovens,

Corresponding secretary of the
Peterborough Active Army Auxiliary.

I know the Postmaster General spoke on matters of this kind yesterday, but I do not think he mentioned letters going into hospitals. I wondered if it was a fact that the mail was held up and kept in the unit until the man returned. Will the minister answer that?

With regard to internment operations, last year the expenditures were about \$8,430,000. This year the estimate is about \$3,730,000. There is a difference there of over \$4,000,000. Will the minister tell us why there is that difference and if it is caused partly by the fact that some of those prisoners are working in different camps and projects throughout this country?

The next item has to do with the inspection board of United Kingdom and Canada. Last year the amount was \$10,600,000. This year it is reduced by only \$11,000. I understand that production has been cut considerably in the plants. Why is the figure held as high this year?

There is another item further down that has to do with the dependents' allowance board. I know of a soldier overseas who married a woman a few years ago. This woman had a daughter by a husband who had died. At the time of the woman's second marriage her daughter was four years old. The woman is receiving assigned pay from her husband and dependents' allowance for herself. She is not allowed anything for her daughter. The dependents' allowance board say it is not the soldier's daughter, but the wife's daughter. They will not allow anything for that child. Can anything be done in a case like that?

Mr. RALSTON: I shall take my hon. friend's questions in reverse order. With regard to dependents' allowance, as I understand the regulation the board are authorized to award an allowance in the case of a child—in this case it is the daughter of the wife—if the husband has been supporting the child or has adopted the child. If I remember correctly, it is in the discretion of the board. Apparently they have exercised their discretion and for some reason they have not granted dependents' allowance on account of this child. If my hon. friend will give me the case I shall look into it.

Mr. FRASER (Peterborough West): The soldier is overseas. It would be pretty hard for him to adopt the child now, although he has been supporting the child for eight years or more.

Mr. RALSTON: Section 97 (e) is the governing section:

... and shall, at the discretion of the board, include a child, even though not legally adopted, providing a married applicant has assumed in his own home the care and maintenance of said child for a reasonable period prior to his appointment or enlistment, during which period he has continuously wholly maintained such child and was so maintaining such child at the date of his appointment or enlistment, and continues to do so after his appointment or enlistment.

The discretion is there. If my hon. friend will send me the details of the case I shall look into it.

My hon. friend asked a question with regard to the inspection board and pointed out that there is no real reduction in the estimates of the inspection board, notwithstanding the fact that, as he suggests, production is down.